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EXAMINATIONS
in
The PNEU School

He shall 'pray for the children to prosper in good life and good literature'. (Dean Colet)



CHARLOTTE M. MASON
Founder & Principal (1891-1923)

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EXAMINATIONS IN THE PNEU SCHOOL AND SCHOOLS AFFILIATED

By G. H. A. STEPHENS, M.A., B.LITT. (OXON)

From the beginning examinations have been an important part of our work, not with the intention of criticising or grading, but as a means of encouraging and helping both teacher and taught.

The examiner marks questions set on the syllabus published at PNEU headquarters. Sets of examination papers are issued three times a year, at Christmas, Easter and in the Summer term. The Easter papers are optional.

The marking is not by any inflexible absolute standard. It is expressed by a written comment or symbol and not by numbers. It is qualitative rather than quantitative. It recognises not only differences in ability, but also differences in circumstances and opportunity. The standard is that of the average child in the age-group.

There is today a new interest in the non-academic child in the educational world. This has been an essential feature of PNEU work from the beginning. The examiner expects to see not only the child's work on the text books, but also to hear of his or her interests, hobbies, community and social activities and personal development.

Children begin sending in their work at the age of six. They are encouraged to regard the examination more as an exhibition of what they can do, than as a test of their strength or weakness. Most children love this. They feel important when someone outside the family or school is shown their efforts. There

need be no 'examination nerves'. We accept the dictum of Sir Cyril Norwood, once Headmaster of Harrow, that an examination report should give *all* pupils 'the sense that they are learning something, learning to do something and proving it'.

We believe that children from a very early age love to learn, explore, acquire skills and generally to occupy themselves. Having done this, they will wish to express and communicate their experience. At first they will naturally have to dictate their 'reports', but often they can set their own impress on this written work by adding a little sketch of their own. It is surprising what they will sketch or attempt to sketch. Their eagerness shows their need for expression.

This eagerness must be encouraged and retained. It may lead them later on to attempt such programmes as those of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award which has precisely the same objects as PNEU has always had, i.e. to discover a particular child's line of interest, and to develop it to a point of excellence. Such a test is really a stimulus to effort and communication—not competition.

In his comments the examiner tries to avoid all suggestion of competition. The reason why the eleven-plus examination was rejected by most educational authorities was because it was agonisingly competitive and selective. From our point of view the basic need is to say whether any particular piece of work is satisfactory or not. If it is the best a child can

do and shows interest and effort then it is satisfactory or 'good'. Almost every child is capable of good work in this sense. If the work is above average it may deserve the comment 'very good' or 'excellent'. If the work is below average, though it shows some interest and effort the comment will be 'fairly good'. If the work is marked 'fair' or 'poor', this means that it is not good enough for that particular child.

The children in the upper forms of PNEU receive experience of public examination papers and grading. Parents can help greatly by understanding that there is a difference between these examinations and those of the PNEU. It is no doubt rather puzzling at first to be told that 'good' work by PNEU standards does not necessarily mean a pass at the 'O' level of the G.C.E. On the other hand it might mean a very satisfactory level in the new C.S.E. because this examination caters as we do for the child of average ability, avoids excessively fine grading, and is more flexible in syllabus and range of subjects.

In certain subjects marking will be less flexible than in others. For instance a sum must be right or wrong, and although method and neatness will count, they will not alter the fact that a right answer is right. And so in Mathematics and basic languages the standards are more precise than in 'narration' subjects, and schools often do their own marking here.

Again, in some subjects, especially formal English Grammar, an answer may be right by chance. A pupil may pick out three 'subjects' out of four correctly, and yet show by 'fluffing' the fourth that the real principle of the thing is not, in fact, understood. The mark here will try and indicate this.

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Coming now to the 'narration' subjects we touch on some of the basic PNEU principles. 'Telling back' is a vital part of our work because it involves not only memory but judgment. The child's personality is involved and he or she gives back not only what has been given, but what has become his or her own. There must be no prompting or catechising. The teacher must stand aside. The child is to put in what he likes, to leave out what he likes and to stop when he likes. Perhaps one should add 'within reason' to the last sentence, as parents who are writing the younger children's reports sometimes get worn out before the children! But the main point is clear. The child's answer is an exercise in choice as well as memory. It has to decide what is relevant to any particular answer, and it is in this power of choice that the child becomes a person whose intellectual development is linked to its moral and spiritual development. We begin to see, even on the level of examinations, what Charlotte Mason meant when she chose as our motto, 'Education is a Life'.

As the child develops the question of relevance will apply not only to the subject matter but to the expression. The choice of the *mot juste* will become as much an exercise in relevance as the choice of subject matter from Form IV onward. The eager outpourings of the earlier years must be disciplined and pruned, and here our encouragement of verse-writing can help. Great poetry is not expected, but a careful and colourful expression of an idea or an image is often possible.

The basic principle of the PNEU teaching is that the child's mind and personality will develop normally and naturally by contact with the world's best literature, Art and Music. In

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these spheres the young mind can feed and grow in knowledge, understanding and judgment. In most subjects the sense of appreciation will be implicit, but in certain subjects a more explicit judgment is expected, e.g. in Picture Study the youngest child is capable of saying whether he likes the picture or not. This will obviously apply too to Music Appreciation, and more and more from IIIA onward personal comment and reaction is encouraged. Always we are looking not for repetition or feats of memory, but for evidence of interest, experience, involvement in the subject, not as an academic exercise, but as an eager sharing of a universal human inheritance.

A word about 'Science' subjects. Here we recognise a changing situation. Some subjects such as Nature Study and to some extent Geography have developed greatly in content and method during the past fifty years. The disciplines of Science rather than those of Art are used more and more here, and so classification and accuracy of detail have become more and more important. Diagrams replace sketches, and maps and graphs are vital. But behind the detail we remember that these subjects are still concerned with the world in which we live, and so we must do all we can to preserve our human interest in them, and to bring out their relevance to life. Science

stands to gain greatly by the use of imagination, and any indication that the teacher realises this as shown in the children's work is particularly welcome.

In the 'sciences' there has been a great development lately in 'project' work. Here the contribution of each child is often anonymous. It is a joint effort, and each child's satisfaction derives from its share in what is often an impressive whole. Here, quite clearly, the emphasis is on exhibition rather than examination, but nevertheless the evidence of effort is as clearly 'examinable' as individual work, and many schools send specimens of their work in this field.

Apart from the 'work', the teacher or parent is asked to reveal the child's interests and hobbies and give some indication of his or her personal development. These help the examiner to arrive at a picture of the child 'in the round'. It is in the child as a person that we are interested. The mind is only an instrument of the self and develops step by step with the whole development of man. Today we are appalled by the possibilities that confront us when man's intellectual achievement outstrips his moral development. Our founder made the essential connection between the two quite clear long ago, and thus gave us our charter.

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EXAMINATIONS AND THE P.N.E.U.

Charlotte Mason's method of education in a
Boys' Preparatory School

By

A. V. C. MOORE

LONDON :

PARENTS' NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL UNION

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EXAMINATIONS AND THE P.N.E.U.

CHARLOTTE MASON'S METHOD OF EDUCATION IN A BOYS' PREPARATORY SCHOOL

By A. V. C. MOORE *

This is a revision of a paper I wrote, about the practical side of Charlotte Mason's method in a boys' preparatory school, in which I propose to put before you some of the results of my own experience in running a preparatory school on her lines. Previously I had taught in several preparatory schools and had felt so discouraged by the general apathy of the boys and by the poor results not only of my own teaching, but of that of others, that I decided, with the help of my wife, who was trained by Charlotte Mason at Ambleside, to start a boys' preparatory school which should be quite definitely a P.N.E.U. school, that is to say, a school governed as much as possible by Charlotte Mason's method. By this method I mean her philosophy of Education as expounded in her books. On reading her books, one could see quite clearly that her method was, in theory at any rate, comprehensive and magnificent and that in her discovery of vast forces of mind in children she went to the heart of a problem that must have perplexed so many teachers. Briefly, the problem may be stated as follows: 'Why is it that although all children have in them a wonderful desire for knowledge up to the age of about six or seven, yet after that age this desire tends to disappear?' I maintain from practical experience that Charlotte Mason has not only solved this problem, but has built up a wonderful method of education by which children's minds may grow naturally in the right direction, and that she has made it possible for parents to watch this growing of their children's minds and to take an important part in it. It is not my intention to try to expound Charlotte Mason's philosophy. To understand this one must study her books carefully; but if I can mention some of the mistaken notions about it that I myself have come up against, I may perhaps be able to help one or two who are anxious to start work similar to mine, or to clear away doubts in the minds of any parents who view the method with a certain amount of distrust, owing to its management in some quarters.

The most damaging notion that I found in the minds of many people was that the Common Entrance Examination to Public Schools was a serious obstacle to the P.N.E.U. method, or rather, what was more serious still, that it was a serious obstacle to the Common Entrance Examination. Would the boys be able to pass this dreaded examination for certain, and would they pass it well? As I could not in the early days answer this question practically, all my boys being too young for the examination, I had to wait some years until I could. As a result of my experience I can say quite definitely that boys following the Parents' Union School programmes do *not* find the Common Entrance Examination an obstacle but rather take it easily as being an examination on only a small portion of their mental equipment. I would like to explode once and for all the idea that our method makes it difficult for a boy to get

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into his public school. A properly trained boy has little chance of showing what he knows in the Common Entrance Examination, which is an examination for which boys certainly can be and often are crammed. In addition to Languages and Mathematics, which are the chief Common Entrance subjects, and which Charlotte Mason recognised to be of great importance in the school curriculum, I had in my school the following subjects for which a definite programme of work was set and sent out each term by the Director of the Parents' Union School and which cannot possibly be crammed: Bible Lessons, English History, Ancient History, General History, Literature, Citizenship, Geography, Natural History, General Science, Picture Study, Drawing, Singing, Music Appreciation and Handicrafts. My hours were not any longer than the usual preparatory school hours, and I did not neglect games and athletics as I am very keen indeed on these for boys. I was asked: 'How do you possibly find the time to fit in all these things?' The answer is that the periods of work are short, never longer than half an hour: that the boys show an astounding keenness in all work and a wonderful power of concentration due to the narration of a passage after only one reading: that there is continual variety and so the boys do not get tired: that there is no revision: that the interest and concentration gained by what I may call our chief subjects, are also brought to bear upon what I may call the Common Entrance subjects, Languages and Mathematics, and consequently much less time is required for these than one would have imagined. There is no real evening preparation, by which I mean preparation of some lesson to be heard the next day in school hours, but in my school boys of the two upper forms had this time for extra lessons in any Common Entrance or scholarship subject that needed special attention. This evening work was mostly written work done by the boys without help but corrected immediately or out of school. I have been asked by some people: 'How will these boys be able to take to a couple of hours' preparation at their public school, if they have done none at their preparatory schools?' The answer is that our boys spend a very large portion of their school hours doing work for themselves without any assistance, and that they are thus more than qualified to deal with a couple of hours' preparation, and also that their evening work is very much in the nature of preparation except that it is not allowed to upset the next day's lessons. A great deal of time is wasted in many schools over the so-called preparation of a lesson to be heard next morning. Let me take as an example an English History preparation. A boy may be given a chapter of history of five or six pages, and half an hour to deal with it. His plan is to go over it several times until he thinks he knows it, or he may not bother about it at all, and trust to his good fortune on the morrow. When the time comes for the lesson on the next day, the master may question his class orally to find out whether they know their preparation, or ask them to write answers to a set of questions which can easily be marked in class. This takes considerable time in which the boys' interest is mainly centred on what marks they can acquire, or how they can avoid notice for having neglected their prep. In the time left the master will teach the boys a little on their particular piece of history, and the boys may or may not listen. As opposed to this I would describe a history lesson of half an

hour, with *no* preparation beforehand. After a short summary of the previous lesson a chapter of history is read aloud round the form or perhaps silently, and then one boy is called on to tell what he has read. He does this to the best of his ability; the others are listening eagerly and are longing to fill in anything the boy has left out, and this they are allowed to do when the boy has finished narrating; it is sheer joy to the teacher to see the keenness. If there is a particular point or any special date which the teacher wants to emphasise, he does this after the boys have dealt with their lesson first of all themselves, but he is very sparing of his remarks. They get their knowledge for themselves from their books. Sometimes the boys write part of their narration. This can be done during evening work and corrected. Notice there are no marks given in these lessons, nor in any other P.U.S. subject throughout the term. Marks seem to be a necessity in most schools in order to get the boys to work, but they work for the marks and not for knowledge. There is no need for marks with the P.N.E.U. method as the interest is aroused without them. At the end of each term an examination is sent out by the Director of the Parents' Union School. The astonishing way in which boys of all forms pour out their knowledge can only be believed by those who have seen it. The P.U.S. return exam. papers with remarks on each subject.

Another mistaken notion is 'that P.N.E.U. is only meant for girls, or for small boys up to the age of nine or ten, but after that age it is too soft: that boys need a real preparatory school to put some manhood into them in order to prepare them for the hard life of their public school.' I am unable to understand how a well-balanced mind, filled with real vigorous life and joy in knowledge, can do otherwise than produce manliness. A boy who grows up with a love for knowledge, for pictures, poetry or music may be less savage than he was before, but need not be less manly. Charlotte Mason's method does not exclude games, physical training, boxing, etc. Her method embraces a profoundly deep training of body and mind, and does not in the least mean interference with the athletic training of a boy. It would surely be very difficult, if not impossible, to devise a scheme of education more comprehensive than hers. What about beauty in the life of a small schoolboy? Is he to think only in terms of football matches, sweets, motor-cars, cinemas and jazz-bands? Is not the life of a child of two years' old full of beauty and wonder? Is he to be starved of this beauty and wonder when he begins so-called 'lessons'? What about the beauty of music, of pictures, of poetry, and the beauty of the earth and the heavens in the life of a schoolboy? Children love to sing and should not be given trash to sing. They love to hear good music. They love pictures, and should be gradually made acquainted with the best. One has only to see the real joy of a child of two or three years' old in wild flowers to realise the appeal that the beauty of the earth makes. Is all this love of beauty to be starved because a boy is at school? Charlotte Mason's method of education includes all these things.

Her method is often recommended for difficult or so-called backward children, that is when other schemes have failed. One hears it said as a last hope: 'Why not try the P.N.E.U.?' This sometimes gives the impression that it is rather tame and soft for normal children. Of course

this notion is all wrong. The training of the will, the habit of concentration, and the development of the reasoning powers, the many avenues of interest opened up—all these things are naturally helpful to a backward boy, but they are in a still greater degree helpful to average and clever boys. The clever boys obtain a stability of outlook and a balance of mind of extreme importance to them when they begin specialising rather early at their public schools. A boy of slow development will probably get more from this method than any other method, but I do want to point out that, in my own experience, I have found that average and clever boys gain in every way from the education provided by the P.N.E.U.

The question is sometimes asked: 'What is the best age for a boy to begin his education?' The answer is: 'As soon as he is born if possible, but at any rate, as soon as possible!' Charlotte Mason's book, *Home Education*, deals with the whole of education from infancy until the age of nine. It would be good if an endeavour could be made to plan the whole of the educational life of a boy in this method in one continuous chain, at any rate up to the time a boy reaches his public school.

I am myself so convinced that this method acts on the minds of boys as a marvellous force for good that I am anxious to see it taken up in more and more preparatory schools. There are many difficulties in the way, one or two of which I shall point out, but, to my mind, one of the best ways of overcoming these difficulties is for parents and Public Schools to make a demand for it, and a growing demand will help to create the supply.

As regards the difficulties of starting the method in preparatory schools, there is, I feel, at present not very much interest in the matter. At a conference of Preparatory School Headmasters, a discussion was opened by one member on 'Charlotte Mason's method, its meaning and possible application to Preparatory Schools.' By the way the speaker opened this discussion, one could see that he himself had grasped fully the main points of her teaching, and that he realised fully the great importance of it, but the discussion itself revealed little interest in the matter. In the short account of the Conference, as given in the *Times Educational Supplement* everything that took place was mentioned except this discussion on the P.N.E.U., which was not even referred to! This lack of interest is natural, since each headmaster runs his school in the way he feels best and he does not like the idea of any outside interference. The majority of preparatory schools are flourishing and are quite successful in the Common Entrance Examination, and in the winning of some scholarships in Public Schools. What need is there then for any alteration? I do not wish to belittle the work done in preparatory schools. Much of it is excellent, but I do feel that in the teaching of English subjects, the adoption of a fuller curriculum would be a great gain to them, and would not hinder progress in languages and mathematics, but rather help these on, and I know that the astonishing interest and joy in school work, and the power of concentration shown by boys whose minds have been fed on this curriculum would amaze many a headmaster. The effect of a much wider mental outlook is considerable upon the way in which boys tackle the difficulties of Latin, French, Greek and

Mathematics. I myself found the power of narration of great use in the teaching of French and I used it also in the teaching of Latin and Greek. The interference with the liberty of the preparatory schoolmaster by the P.U.S. authorities is so small compared with the tremendous progress the method ensures, that it need not be considered at all.

I gather that apparently some headmasters wish to be able to have the programmes of work and to make as much or as little use of them as they wish, and when this request is refused, they look upon the P.N.E.U. as a sort of secret society possessing a wonderful magic in the way of teaching, but giving it only to a few initiated. As this is such an important point, I will now quote Miss Mason's own words on the matter from her book, *An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education*:

'We do not invite Heads of schools to take up work lightly which implies a sound knowledge of certain principles and as faithful a practice. The easy tolerance which holds smilingly that everything is as good as everything else, that one educational doctrine is as good as another, that, in fact, a mixture of all such doctrines gives pretty safe results,—this sort of complacent attitude produces lukewarm effort and disappointing progress. I feel strongly that to attempt to work this method without a firm adherence to the few principles laid down, would be not only idle but disastrous. "Oh, we could do anything with books like those," said a master; he tried the books and failed conspicuously because he ignored the principles. We teachers are really modest and diffident and are not prepared to say that we are more capable of handling a subject than is a carefully chosen author who writes especially upon that subject. "Yes, but," says a young and able teacher, "we know better how to reach the minds of children than does the most eloquent author speaking through the dull pages of a book." This is a contention of which we have finally disposed. We have shown that the mass of knowledge, evoking vivid imagination and sound judgment, acquired in a term from the proper books, is many times as great, many times more thoroughly visualised by the scholars than had they waited upon the words of the most able and effective teacher. It is not that teachers are not eminently capable, but because information does not become knowledge unless a child perform the "act of knowing" without the intervention of another personality.'

Another great difficulty is that of securing competent Assistant Masters. Girls' schools are more fortunate, as they can obtain trained teachers from the Charlotte Mason College, but in boys' schools there seems to be an idea that training is unnecessary. If anyone could start a training college for P.N.E.U. men teachers, where they could thoroughly investigate our principles, I am sure he would be doing a great and useful work. There is a notion in the minds of some people that P.N.E.U. children are little prigs, because they know so much and have too good an opinion of themselves. I must admit that here is a real danger, and this is one of the reasons why it is *absolutely necessary* to have teachers who have gone to Charlotte Mason's books and studied her philosophy, in order to set about practical work in the right way and with the right spirit. When the method is misdirected it is possible that little prigs may be produced.

I venture to express an opinion that if preparatory schools could genuinely apply this method of education in their schools, we should be able to present to the Public Schools and any Secondary School, boys more alert mentally and ready to work, and we should thus make the heavy task of these schools easier. Too much has been heard of the failure of the Public Schools and not enough about their splendid work, but what about the education given by the previous schools who have the boys at a most impressionable age. Who knows what wonderful powers of good are lost to the world, through the mental starvation of children up to the ages of eleven or fourteen.

To take only one example of what is being done at the Public Schools, I would like to mention the very considerable progress in musical education. Would not the careful training of our preparatory schoolboys in a proper musical atmosphere make the task of the Public Schools' Music Masters lighter and more productive of good results? The P.U.S. curriculum sets one of the great composers for study each term. In my school the boys heard some music by the set composer each week, they also had class-singing twice a week, and one lesson a week in sight-singing and general musical knowledge.

Finally, the holidays are rather a problem that needs tackling. Some boys go back a long way during holidays owing partly to the cessation of a regular life and discipline, but chiefly owing to too much feeding of the body and too little feeding of the mind. Under our present system of boarding school education, parents hand over their boys to the schoolmaster for nine months in the year and have them at home for three months of the year. They sometimes complain that the holidays are too long, and they are glad to get the boys back at school again. Now some sort of mental nourishment is necessary during holidays, if boys are not to lose some of the results of the term. Our members could do some good here. No doubt it would be hard work for the parents, but yet it would be worth while. Our method of education offers a comprehensive scheme for both term and holiday, a scheme interesting to both children and parents. Many parents would enjoy reading some of the books their children have at school, and thereby forge a link of interest of invaluable worth in bringing up their children. They might endeavour to get a greater amount of regularity into the holiday life and give some time for reading books set for holiday time, or others of their own choice. Sometimes parents are not interested in the things which are being learned at school, e.g. music, pictures, and literature generally, and the children are bound to suffer. The influence of mind upon mind is the greatest factor in education, and in holiday time the influence of the parents' minds on their children is of the greatest importance. I speak as a parent as well as a schoolmaster. For small boys who fill our Preparatory Schools and eventually our Public Schools, this is an age of too much restlessness, too much entertainment of a lazy nature. The Preparatory School boy is an exceedingly difficult being to deal with, without some comprehensive scheme which shall nourish his mind on the right lines without interruption and sliding back. We offer such a comprehensive scheme for parents and children. I would urge all those who have not made a study of Charlotte Mason's method to read her books, especially her last book, *An Essay towards a Philosophy of Education*.

There is a larger view as the years progress. My boys passed into some forty public schools, and I can testify that their training, based on Charlotte Mason's philosophy of education, enabled them to make the most of their Public school education. Some relations established were temporarily disconnected, as it were, but resumed in many cases on leaving school. Charlotte Mason was ahead of her time, and as the years have gone by one has seen many of the things she advocated being adopted in the best part of the march of civilisation. I am more and more filled with wonder by that which she has bequeathed to mankind. Her work has a spiritual foundation on which it is firmly built. It is not fixed and stereotyped, but is ever open to embrace all the possibilities of a fuller life. No one *could* call it narrow or cranky. That it needs a large vision to follow it is all to the good: that it *can* be, and *is*, played about with half-heartedly, is no fault of hers. It needs ardent disciples and passionate apostles fired with the calm of her faithful vision. The difficulty of obtaining *men* teachers devoted to it still remains, and *must* remain till someone, in a position to do so, does something by way of a beginning to attract young *men* to such work. The world is filled with dangers, and 'wars and rumours of wars,' and more and more is sound KNOWLEDGE necessary, leavened by faith in God, and Nature, His external handiwork. Charlotte Mason's work is universal: it will not grow out of date, but will move on with the needs of humanity. It has been faithfully carried on by many devoted followers, but as we grow old in the turmoil of a half-chaotic world, are we not at times filled with a fear lest 'the harvest should be indeed great, but the labourers few'? No doubt the comparatively small development of this work in *boys'* schools may have somewhat accentuated this fear in *me*; but because of my faith in this great work, a faith strengthened by practical experience of it, I make this appeal (in the hope that some, gifted with power and means, may be interested) that something should be done, as soon as possible, to bring about a closer collaboration of men and women for the preserving and spreading of this great educational bequest to teachers, parents, and children.

It is generally agreed that after the age of 11 or 12, boys should be for the *most* part taught by men, and girls by women. We men, striving after this great inheritance, are under a handicap, for there is no source of supply of teachers. Each new master, on arrival, has to learn that his old ways are not acceptable. Sometimes he is very willing to break into new ways: sometimes he is half-hearted, for habit is too strong for him. Too often, P.N.E.U. means no more than narration. Charlotte Mason's wisdom is a 'pearl of great price' which many men would give all they possess, could they but find it.

'Pray ye then

The Lord of the Harvest labourers to send
East, West and North and South, lest this good grain,
For want of harvesting, rot on the ground:
Plenteous the harvest, but the labourers few.'

CHARLOTTE M. MASON.

23/11/15

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- I. THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL by the Chief Examiner
- II. CONFIDENCES OF AN EXAMINER by G.H.A.S.
- III. NOTES ON EXAMINATIONS IN THE P.U.S. by the Director

THE PARENTS' UNION SCHOOL

BY THE CHIEF EXAMINER

The following account is intended first to introduce the broad theory; then to show it at work; and in conclusion to emphasise the significance of so personal and humanistic an approach to education in view of the modern danger of losing the individual in the mass.

PERSON

I. PRINCIPLES

First in Charlotte Mason's mind, and heart, came insistence upon the *Person* in each child, however young. To her this was sacred, and the real self was never to be offended in its integrity. It followed that each young person was to be invited and enabled to develop, as a flower unfolds, according to his nature; yet with such direction as would fit him for his work in life. Teachers and parents are indeed strongly urged to think about the all-round person in each child, and to comment upon his development in school and out.

RELEVANCE

This main purpose of education leads to the second great principle—that of *Relevance*. Prizes and penalties, together with personal likes and dislikes, are all irrelevant to the *subject in hand*; whether it be the study of a plant or picture, or of an episode in history, or of a mathematical process, or of a straight bat in cricket. True learning is a natural food which the growing child will take up and assimilate and never lose.

NARRATION

Never lose—that brings me to the third point, the *telling-back* of whatever has been studied in class or in the field. Others have stressed the importance of a child's personality, and the need for relevance is self-evident—despite the wide use still of marks and rewards and punishments: but the Parents' Union School is unique in its strong insistence on the *narration* by the child of facts and thoughts just put before him, for then they will be never lost; not stored in his memory, but part of him.

This method of assimilation belongs closely to the emphasis that the great psychologist, Professor William James, put on *doing something about* a fresh living experience—'if it is only giving up your seat in a bus on your way home from a fine concert,' he said. Or you would tell some friend about it eagerly.

A youngster, John, I once met (on paper) had been deeply moved by the death of Harold at Hastings, and he told it back vividly, ending upon a sigh with '... poor man!' He had made that story his own in the telling of it back, and it would stay with him for good.

Or, again, I recall an essay by a girl of seventeen on 'Sacrifice' in which she came to the judgment that the best service to oneself was to sacrifice the self. It is an old story, that one must lose oneself to find oneself; but Jenny, as she thought about it, did more than repeat verbally what had been discussed in class or in books; as she wrote she was

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clearly assimilating it all, making it her own, and she reached for herself that profound conclusion.

Does not this link on closely to Charlotte Mason's devotion to person? Both John and Jenny spoke from their real selves.

You can see it again in the way the grasp of the Earth's motion, of an animal's life, of a picture seen, take their place quite naturally in the mind of the child who has quietly attended to them, and assimilated them by *telling them back* in his own words.

REMARKS

A point of procedure which Miss Mason long wanted and which has now been adopted was that numerical marks should be abolished. She said:

'We feel it desirable to obviate *examination marks* altogether; but it is necessary that parents should have some means of judging whether their children are or are not making satisfactory progress, and this information is best given by means of marks which represent, not a numerical value, but a remark, such as "good", "fair", "excellent", etc.

'No class lists *in order of merit* are published or kept. The marks assigned to a scholar for any set of papers show whether he is above or below the average for his age and form, but have no relative place value. But in order that there may be no undue pressure on the part of the scholar to obtain marks to the neglect of interest in knowledge, the maximum marks are given, not to the best papers, but to papers showing *quite satisfactory progress* for the age and form of the pupil.'

These ideas are now embodied in *remarks* without any figures, actually more explicit than the single words she suggested: and the examiner sums up the papers as a whole with a general comment at the end.

THINGS AND BOOKS

Lastly there are Miss Mason's views on the use of *things* and *books*. She wanted immediate contact with things themselves, on the one hand, with nature, pencil or brush, needle or a tool; and, on the other hand, with the minds of great writers. All these interests are provided for by the P.U.S. programme; and there is a special concern about the right books, though these have been so difficult to get after the two wars.

The books she insisted on were those of authors whose knowledge and enthusiasm make their truth live, and give them the power to pass it on in language clear and impressively interesting. She pleaded that we should let such master-teachers link the young learner to the subject directly, and ourselves stand on one side — like good gardeners who know that plants must do their own growing, in the conditions they need. Yet she was ever in the right line from such wise men as à Kempis and knew that book-learning is but one form of experience, only one way among others to judgment and living growth. 'Things', in the widest sense, creatively used, serve to give the personality the needed conditions for growth no less than books.

AT HEADQUARTERS

II. PRACTICE

The administration of all the work of the School has various sides. There is the introduction of enquirers, from homes or schools, to the

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system as a whole. There is the close watch over each child individually and his or her development from term to term, in mind and body —and one might well add in spirit, for parents and teachers are expected to report on such matters as responsibility, help in the home, and leadership in the school.

Books

As to the bookwork, great pains are taken to carry out Charlotte Mason's ideals, despite difficulties. When books go out of print (precious ones like the Buckley Science series) new ones have to be found and tested over a period, and adopted or rejected.

Programmes

The programmes for the coming term must be worked out with the greatest care. The setting of the questions for the six forms illustrates particularly well the organic relationship of the three branches, administration, teaching and examining. After each examination the Director and members of Headquarters who are concerned review the detailed reports of examiners as to the success or failure of a given question or book; and the Chief Examiner sends in a General Report on the examination as a whole. There are also some Special Reports on schools which have arranged to have them. All this enables the programme-setters to adjust questions and books for the next term. There is no hackneyed fixed procedure: it is live and flexible all the time.

Finally, the Director and various specialists go through all the papers as they come in from the examiners. This leads to many letters of advice and actual visits to homes and schools which seem to need help.

THE TEACHING

It might be said that here in the actual class-work is the most important part of the whole—true: but it is the aim all the while not to let teachers feel in the least isolated. Headquarters and examiners are constantly engaged in helping those who actually meet the children in or out of the class-room.

Bridge-makers

To the ancient Romans the supreme link between God and man was their Pontifex, the *bridge-maker*. Charlotte Mason strove to make all of us bridge-makers between the divinity of true knowledge and of human personality and our children's minds. That is the essential function of teaching. Here, let us say, is the Pythagorean theorem in geometry, clear in the teacher's mind, and he is to get it across to the class; not indeed by any *pons asinorum*, but by a bridge of intelligent interest linking the two sides. Or, in Form I, it could be just leading young John across to the noble pathos of Harold and his defeat.

How is this bridging to be done? To return to the Mason principles, there must be *relevance to the subject* all the time, with no interposing of the teacher's personality to distract. And, supplementary to that, there is to be respect for the integrity of each separate person in the class—to that end how much better it would be to break from tradition and put the weak ones, who most need help, in the front seats!

There is to be the best book obtainable, and if it is a narrative subject, such as History or Literature, it is to be read quietly and told back afterwards as I have described in giving the principle of narration. For this Miss Mason required three things in the class especially—*confidence*, quiet *attention* without distracting and irrelevant motives, and the pupil's own active *response*. Given these conditions the story or description will stay in the child's mind for good. No revision is needed, or ever used, in P.U.S. work. Nor does a term's work end with the term; it is there still long after. Perhaps some Sixth Form girl's essay discussing a novel will use a parallel from, say, the drama of 'Ruth', or some nature-walk, or piece of music, once described in a narration of years back. It is still there, part of herself for good.

'Disciplinaries'

But what of the hard subjects, it will be asked, the 'disciplinary' ones, as they are called? How can one apply narration to geometry or multiplication or Latin syntax? Of course you can't: but the point of the telling-back was to *do something about* the new mental experience. And if the pupil can prove that theorem with a figure on paper or at the board, then, as surely as in re-telling a history event, the work is assimilated and made his own.

There are, however, many slow by nature to grasp mathematics or grammar—what is the teacher to do about them? Keep the work *relevant*, suited to the child's power of understanding. Give him a programme easier than that of his Form; easy enough for the confidence to return which Miss Mason wanted, and give him a sense of mastery—and, no doubt, with it the assurance that this teacher can teach after all! Or let the French *Dictée* chosen be easy enough for some to get it all right, and none to feel defeated and silly; for that is to offend against their integrity.

Counsels of perfection? Yes, to be sure: and that is the way one does advance.

Whole Person

Lastly, the teacher is going to pass on the child to an examiner: let it be the whole child. As he opens the papers let him see first (in the *Remarks* on N.2) a few lines of sympathetic description of the young person being introduced to him. This means a little extra trouble, but it can be very rewarding to the parent or teacher to have to pause and look at all sides of the child—at interests and responsibilities that compensate, perhaps, for poor bookwork; and to be glad after all that he is not the exasperating failure he sometimes seems to be.

EXAMINING

So I come to the third branch, that of examining the term's work sent in on paper. The P.U.S. examiners are on a different footing from those who handle the ordinary public examinations. Such are not concerned at all with anything but the written answers before them; but we work in close relation with Headquarters and the teachers or parents. That *vignette* of the child as a person which comes with the papers is going to influence the examiner's comments. 'Susan was in bed for half the examination,' he is told—the comment on her will not stress the weakness in her work, but rather commend her good effort. Or, it is

reported that George Davies has made a fine Form-prefect, or he has a good piece of garden of his own — is he to be disheartened by a too exacting comment on his weak bookwork? There might rather be something to help him, quite simple, such as 'George Davies is evidently stronger out of school than in'—that way he keeps his integrity, and gets his right value as a whole person.

Yet these examples are but a meagre way to express what the parent's or teacher's introduction of a child can mean to an examiner. It begins to have the flavour of a momentary personal interview; the writer of the papers on his desk comes alive.

The Questions Set

Then there is also the guidance which examiners can give to the setters of the questions at Headquarters, to which I have already referred. For example, the mere repetition of 'Fair' or 'Poor' throughout a Form's work on some question is itself an indication that either the book, or the question set, or the teacher has failed.

There are, too, those Special Reports on whole schools which pass through Headquarters and afford further guidance as to how the work is going.

Not Against the Book

We do not estimate the papers sent in against the book, as in so many other examinations; but against the work of many hundreds of children doing the same programme. *Vox populi, vox dei*—one might say. If the majority of children fail on a given question, that is final—it was too hard, or the book was poor, or poorly used. Failure is so rare: not to get the *point* at least, even if meagrely told sometimes, is to fall below the P.U.S. threshold; and if many do, something is wrong.

One hundred per cent

Also, following Charlotte Mason's principle again, the examiners are not shy of giving full marks, i.e. 'Excellent'. Others, too, have endorsed her point: the distinguished Headmaster, Sir Cyril Norwood, once told the Assistant Masters' Association:

'I want to see a school examination so constructed that our good boys and girls will regularly get 100 per cent. on all the papers . . . I want to see a pass standard of something like 70 per cent . . . so that our pupils can get the sense that they are learning something, learning to do something and proving it, and not have the feeling that they are brought up against an almost insuperable barrier because they have to do papers which are set by the examiners purely for testing the abler candidates.'

And again an enlightened report on the old School Certificate Examination said:

'The adoption of this principle of "easy papers and a high standard of marking" does not involve any lowering of the standard of the examination: what it does mean is that the standard will be a real one and not a false standard, and will reach out to every child, not only the clever ones.'

(H.M.S.O., 1931; par: 48)

Every child — would those, Principals and others, who find the P.U.S. values too generous, take fresh heart from those quotations?

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Some are worried to find their pupils getting lower values in a public examination, especially the G.C.E., than we give: but it is a choice of methods. One might almost say that Miss Mason and other advanced educationists would have us look for the *good* in the weaker ones and encourage them.

It is in fact found that the ordinary P.U.S. work serves well at the preparatory school level as a training for the Common Entrance Examination. For the General Certificate Examination some necessary modification of the ordinary programme is provided by Headquarters, for Form V particularly.

Flexibility

Then again examiners here are not bound by the exigencies of competition—no prize or job hangs upon the precision of their valuing. Hence there is a flexibility and absence of strain in their task, which leads to a far truer estimate of the living person being judged than the more rigid way could ever afford. This appears in the practice we have developed of extending those simple words, 'Good', 'Fair', 'Poor', etc. A public examiner who gives 70 per cent. for some paper may have reached that figure by combining, say, 30 for accuracy, 25 for detail, 15 for style. In such a case we should stop at the words which the 70 per cent. represents, and say, perhaps—'A full and careful report; English rather weak', without any figure at all.

Examiner at Work

Shall I give a little account of the actual examining? Some uneasy teacher might protest that when an examiner sits down to a thousand sets of papers, his judgment of *relative* values (on which the Mason method especially rests) may be growing sound after the first hundred or so, indeed; but what of the early ones? Such a difficulty could assuredly apply to a new examiner beginning this kind of valuing, yet it would be mitigated much by guidance from an experienced trainer—and, of course, it happens in public examinations, too, errors being adjusted by a Board; as they are here by supervision from Headquarters.

Presently, though, the memory of previous sessions, and the constant stream of late-comers from abroad, serve to keep the standards of valuing continuous and flexibly relative. Nevertheless it remains true that judgment does actually grow more assured as the first hundred wears on; and possibly to review that hundred at a later stage might a little modify some of the valuation. But against this has to be set the point that in any such revision something of the *fresh sweep*, the sub-conscious *feeling* for values, would be lost. The experienced examiner himself has his mind set at ease on this score by finding that to take any set of papers at random and re-value it, without looking at the first report sheet, does actually result in a very close correspondence between the two markings.

There is in fact a rhythm in the swift but unhurried survey of the papers before one that gives a living precision, which more meticulous and laboured estimates cannot achieve. Moreover it is a different kind of precision. It is the experience of most examiners elsewhere that they cautiously keep well below the maximum lest other papers come along better than the best so far. Charlotte Mason urged us not to press for

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such intense competition: 'Excellent' means the paper is good and the work done as it should be, not necessarily the best or a book-perfect one. For instance, I have often given 'Excellent' for a French paper from Form II which has a word or two wrongly spelt: for one knows that spelling is a reasonable difficulty at that age, and the child doubtless speaks the language better than he writes it. He has done well, and if another comes along word-perfect he too will get 'Excellent'.

May I, to reinforce that point, stress once more that the P.U.S. examiners do not evaluate against the book, but against the standard set by very many children doing the same work under varying conditions? One might add that this standard would probably be found statistically at 75 per cent., or even more, for these two reasons: firstly, the children are, as I say, not being estimated against a book perfection—and secondly, because of the characteristic atmosphere in the reading and telling-back of confidence, and of attention undistracted by irrelevant mark-chasing, or personal likes and dislikes, hopes and fears, and the rest. There is a warm feeling in the class but not of that sort; it is the eagerness that belongs to a well-told story, or to the mastery of some point of syntax or of science.

CONCLUSION

My own concluding thought is of the *quality* offered here. Competitive examinations beset us more and more today, and tend to submerge in a kind of mass-education those personal values that Miss Mason so earnestly wanted. The book must be of the best, she said: and then it must be assimilated by each child in conditions of confidence and quiet attention as it is read and told back. That is true *relevance* both to the subject and to the young person taking it; there is a danger that this may be lost in an excess of competition.

I wish those who suspect that the way of live interest is but the easy way in education could see the Sixth Form essays from one of our larger schools. I have lately reported on sixty or seventy from one school (most of the fourteen girls offering five essays each), and almost every one showed the personality of the writer, her real self, together with the hard work put in and power of expressing it despite their varying ability. Other schools outside our field could show similar strength in their Sixth Form work, and more scholarships no doubt—the pupils have usually been selected and trained to that end. But here, in these essays I reviewed, you have a natural flowering of a plant grown wholesomely right up from its roots in Form I. Modern pressure does indeed require some special attention in our Form V for the G.C.E.: but in this Sixth Form work we are back in the natural serenity and happiness of self-fulfilment, which belong to Charlotte Mason's ideals.

Given the courage to face dull work faithfully, and so to stiffen the warm eagerness of narration, then the whole personality of each child will find itself and the range of his ability be fully opened up. The quality will be achieved which can redeem our democratic education from the danger of mediocrity; and save the individual from that submergence in the mass which threatens today.

CONFIDENCES OF AN EXAMINER

by G.H.A.S.

We P.U.S. examiners express our reactions to a child's efforts at expression in a brief comment. These are listed on the report form N.1 under the title of 'Scale of remarks'. Sometimes it will be observed that we allow ourselves to say a little more. For example the remark 'Good' may be followed by the statement that the work is 'clear but short'. From this it is hoped that the examinee will make the correct assumption that had he written more in the same vein he would have qualified for the comment 'Very Good' or 'Excellent'. Each examiner tends to assemble and use an assortment of these secondary comments; the aim of them is not greater accuracy in assessment, which is not part of the P.U.S. scheme of things at all, but at greater co-operation between examiner, teacher and pupil, which is very much part of our policy.

These secondary comments are themselves brief, and this article is written in an attempt to explain and expand their implications.

Very often the comments are negative in form, as criticism so often must be, but in every case they imply a constructive and positive suggestion. They are meant to indicate the lack of some important quality in the child's work. If, therefore, we can establish what these qualities are, then we shall at all events see the end of the road, however much, through the weakness of our children's mortal nature, they may still deviate on the way.

Careful analysis, guided by the Charlotte Mason philosophy, reveals five such qualities. They are, relevance, accuracy, integration, significance and economy. These five names may suggest rather a formidable standard, but we shall see that the things they stand for are really quite simple. The order is, as a whole, unimportant. They are set out in this particular order, because their first letters thus give us the mnemonic RAISE, and surely no one will mind the examiner having his fun!

But our first consideration must always be RELEVANCE, no matter what comes after. And this in P.U.S. work has a special meaning. In any examination it is obviously silly to tell the examiner what he does not want to know, and has not asked for. But there is more to it than this. Relevance implies not only knowledge, but judgment. The mind, and not the memory only, is involved. To be relevant is to be in the service of Truth, which means that a moral as well as a mental element is engaged in this business of education.

This is not altogether new. Our very word 'candidate' (*candidus* = white) enshrines the memory of the white-robed aspirants for office, and so may suggest to us the preparation, the purification, the discipline, the honest work involved in our candidature. Every real examination is a test not of our memories, but of ourselves, of our whole response to a problem. We are not reporters, but judges.

This may seem far-fetched in relation to younger children, but it is not really. A child of three will pass judgment in the face of an adult.

Mother says: 'John, I said "No".' and back will come the response: 'But, I said "Yes"!'. It would be wrong, usually, to let John get away with it, but the fact remains that John in his babyhood, *contra mundum*, is asserting an opinion, making a judgment, emerging into true humanhood.

This element of judgment is always present in P.U.S. examinations. The P.U.S. child is not to be catechised or asked questions. He is not to be given an outline answer. He is to put in what he likes, and leave out what he likes, and stop when he likes. It is John or Mary that the examiner wants to meet, not their parents or teachers. As in teaching Charlotte Mason insisted that the teacher should stand aside, so also in examination the child should be left free. Only so can this important test of relevance be applied.

Even the little ones? Yes, especially the little ones. They indeed rarely fail in relevance. They are the typical 'pure in heart,' the single-minded. They see the thing in the round, and react whole-heartedly to the situation, from the first, 'Well,' to the triumphant, 'and that's the end.'

With older children their very eagerness is sometimes their undoing, and so the disappointing comment comes, 'Read the question,' or 'Keep to the point.' And whereas the little ones are expected to give the whole story, the older ones have to learn more and more to select and arrange, and so, with them, relevance implies a deliberate and conscious choice. Supposing, in Geography, a map of the north-eastern states of the U.S.A. is asked for and a child draws a map of the whole of North America, the effort will be rejected, not because it is wrong—it may be a very good map—but it is not relevant, 'not as set' as we say. There has been a failure of attention or care. The judge has tried the wrong case. In narration subjects the position is often more complicated, but in every case the test of relevance will apply, and in time, a similar privilege of choice will be exercised in the form of expression. To find the *mot juste* will become as much an exercise in relevance as the choice of subject-matter from Form IV onward.

The test of relevance shows our examinations as involving the exercise of this wonderful and subtle power of choice, and makes them much more important than memory tests.

Next on our list is ACCURACY. We have seen that a statement may be accurate but irrelevant. If a man wants to go to a Post Office, it is of no use to direct him to a railway station. But it is still possible to direct him wrongly to the Post Office. In other words, a statement may be relevant, but inaccurate. This sort of thing in examinations produces a crop of such comments as 'muddled,' 'astray,' 'not sure.'

When the P.U.S. method has established itself, inaccuracy is exceptional, though sometimes it will afflict a whole form like a plague. The following instance is exceptional, both in the school concerned, and in our work as a whole. A girl in Form IIIB expressed the opinion that the Ballot Act was 'rather silly because it was done in secret, but after a little while they were discovered.' This can only mean inattention, because it misses the whole point of the Act, although the significant detail of secrecy is remembered.

Sometimes, in a commendable effort to make bricks without straw, a child will make the wildest statements, and, by chance, enrich the world with 'schoolboy howlers'. From the examiner's point of view these, although diverting, are unprofitable, and, dull as it may sound, register only as a defect in accuracy. It may be significant that in over twenty years of P.U.S. examining only one or two genuine howlers have come this examiner's way. The child who thought that the reference to an 'Italian band' in the Acts of the Apostles meant that St. Paul's wanderings were enlivened by an orchestra ought, perhaps, not to be entirely forgotten!

Under this heading it must be pointed out that the P.U.S. examiner's comments do not imply a nicely balanced less or more. To grasp a principle is more important than meticulous accuracy in detail. Conversely a single slip may vitiate a whole answer. In Grammar, for example, a child may show by one mistake that the real nature of the subject-predicate principle is not understood, and therefore will appear to receive little credit for some right (and lucky) guesses.

The third quality, INTEGRATION, is more difficult to deal with, although simple enough to understand. It means merely that all our bits of knowledge should be seen to be parts of wholes. A surgeon learns by dissection, but his knowledge is of use only to whole bodies, living men and women. So in school we learn by subjects, by lessons, in bits and pieces, but these should be fitted in, first to their own context, and then later on to the whole human scene as far as we are able to comprehend it. Our comprehension will be less than that, say, of a Wells or Toynbee, but there is no comprehension at all until our bits of knowledge have a time and place, a context assigned to them.

Even the youngest can be encouraged to say when and where things happen, and later on people and events should always be related to their environment. This principle will be readily accepted in historical subjects, and it is clearly the object of Century Books. But in other subjects too, literature, music appreciation, picture study, it is important for the child to see where a life or work belongs.

This integration is especially important in P.U.S. teaching, in which the individual child's personality is valued so highly. The very essence of 'narration' is that the subject should be absorbed and integrated in the child's own mind, that it should become part of the child's life. And this examiner at all events, feels that more could be done to relate the past to the present. To give an example—how rarely does one find that in discussing church problems of the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries the child is aware that he is talking of his own church, the one he goes to on Sundays. And again, municipal and parliamentary events are often discussed as things utterly remote from ordinary life. So let them ask not only 'How?' but again and again, 'When?', 'Where?', and later on 'Why?', because the tidier their knowledge is, the more readily is it available, and the more does it become knowledge rather than information.

And then we have SIGNIFICANCE. A statement, or a story, may be relevant, accurate and in context, and yet not worth spending time and trouble on. It is always so much easier to remember the gossipy

oddments used as illustrations, than the facts they illustrate. Sometimes these morsels are remembered to the exclusion of all else, and then the comments 'trivial' or 'superficial' appear. The youngest children of all must still draw the examiner aside in the utmost confidence, and tell him an ancient tale, and the examiner will always pretend he is hearing it for the first time, and accept the child's assumption of his complete ignorance, if not stupidity. 'I'll draw a picture so that they'll understand.' But as we grow up we will come to realise that stories, like expressions, may become 'clichés', their juice and goodness extracted, and the freshness and vigour we look for is lost in secondhand and insignificant detail.

Such mistakes may be called mistakes in perspective or mistakes of focus. But all photographers will know our efforts may be 'insignificant' in other ways. We cannot expect a good picture if our negative is too thin and indistinct through errors of exposure. In case of younger children the weakness is often in the writing, which corresponds to the printing process of the photographer. The picture is there, but it is so hard to get on to the paper, and the comment may be, 'Good, but short', or 'Good so far'. This weakness should have been overcome by the time the child reaches Form IIA, and thereafter short narrations are described as 'thin' or 'meagre' or 'sketchy'. The image is just not there, and we must conclude, never has been there, because things that really become part of our minds, and *significant* to them, are not forgotten. Miss Mason insisted on this element of the permanence of the impressions made by ideas on the child's mind. But these impressions are only permanent if the child accepts them as significant, not on anyone else's authority, by virtue of their own truth, interest and relevance. P.U.S. lessons are carefully graduated according to the child's age, and therefore the examiner concludes that if the picture is not received, there has been a failure in the 'exposure', the significant rays of light have somehow been interrupted in their passage from mind to mind.

And here it may be remarked that these 'interruptions' are not the less undesirable, when they are deliberate and well-meant. Sometimes, in an attempt to help, the teacher will embroider the text with imaginary detail. This frequently occurs in Bible Lessons, and is most undesirable. Here, of all places, the text must take care of itself, lest its own magnificent artistry should be spoilt. The comment 'Keep to the text' explains itself, but it should be realised that a very important principle is at stake when it appears.

Lastly, ECONOMY. This, like significance, becomes more and more important from Form IV onward. Often in Form IV when writing is fluent the child becomes a spendthrift of time, words and ideas. After having been encouraged for years to 'write fully' and 'tell all', he now may have the shock of reading the comment 'too long' against an eager effort, or it may be that having given too much time to one question at the expense of another, the comment is 'ill-balanced'. Well, we shall none of us be heard for our much speaking, and most of us have to learn to practise economy sooner or later in many departments of life. Part of the value of writing verse is that it teaches us this lesson of economy and self-control. Few of us would present ourselves for an interview in

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a physically dishevelled state. Yet that is sometimes what happens to our written work; though perhaps neatly written, it just streams out behind us like a banner in a breeze. As our time is limited it is important that we learn to use it to the best advantage. And remember that the examiner's time is limited, too.

In conclusion we may remark that the five qualities we have been considering are valid, not only in respect of our work, but also of ourselves. We parents and teachers wish our children in themselves to be true to the best that we can teach them. We want to fit them to take their useful place in the world, to be *relevant* to their environment. We want them to be true and honest men and women, with trained and *accurate* minds. We want them to recognise their debt to God and man, to find their vocation in life, to be *integrated* in the various societies and communities to which they belong. We want them to feel, not lost in the mass, but with an individual contribution of the utmost importance and *significance*. And we know that self-control and discipline, personal *economy*, are essential to their full and useful development.

We shall not be surprised at this mental-moral conjunction. Our motto is 'Education is a life'. It is an essential P.U.S. principle that the mind is an instrument of the self, and develops step by step with the whole development of man. If it does not do so there is danger. To-day we are appalled by the possibilities that confront us when man's scientific achievement outstrips his moral development. It is to Miss Mason's eternal credit that she made the essential connection between the two quite clear to educationalists long ago.

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NOTES ON EXAMINATIONS IN THE P.U.S.*

by THE DIRECTOR

At recent conferences the P.U.S. has been considered in a variety of ways planned to provoke general discussion from 'both sides of the counter', so we thought that this time we would change the angle of approach so as to give you an idea of some of the work as we tackle it in the P.U.S. Room at Low Nook in Ambleside, with particular reference to programmes and examinations, so I am going to tell you about some of the thoughts which are in our minds and some of the ways in which we prepare the examinations.

In the setting of the questions, each of us undertakes some part of this work and each of us submits our first efforts to the closest possible scrutiny of at least one other member of the staff. We find 'correcting each others' exercises' a pastime which can be most provocative and even entertaining.

Each form and each subject has a different character and a sense of progress up the school must be as inherent in the questions as in the material set for study. To illustrate this let me refer to one specific examination. I have chosen Number 183, Summer 1952.

Form IB. 'Tell one Bible story you have heard this term from the Old Testament.' This will be dictated to a friendly grown-up and asks only for two things — the child's own choice of a story and the words in which to tell it.

Form IA. 'Tell the story of (a) the first Ascension Day, or (b) the lame man at the Gate Beautiful.' Here the advance is in asking for a specific story and, in Upper IA, where the children's fluency begins to impose a severe strain on the amanuensis, in expecting one or two answers to be self-written and therefore, of necessity, very considerably condensed.

Form IIB. These questions differ very little in character from those of Upper IA, but the children are expected to write all, or nearly all, the answers for themselves, therefore unconsciously their fluency is disciplined and careful economy of words is practised. It is imposing too severe a handicap to require ink-writing (except of course for practice in writing lessons, etc.) at this stage, and the examiners cannot make proper allowances for this handicap. It is quite obvious, with really hardly any exceptions, that a IIB pupil who sends in ink-written examinations would have done better in pencil.

Form IIA. Ink writing is compulsory and good, simple punctuation is essential. A few questions are set which require some marshalling of facts from a number of lessons—for example, *British History*, 'Tell how Henry VII became rich and how he used his money'. In Form II, 'Composition' appears for the first time, but it really takes the place of 'Tales' in Form I and 'Literature' higher up the school, and therefore covers the term's general reading. For this and other reasons,

*From a paper read at C.M.C.A. Conference, Ambleside, April, 1954.

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purely imaginative questions are rarely included, but (see Programme) during the term Form II should have opportunities for original writing; many of them do, of course, as members of the Portfolio of Story and Verse. In this form definite evidence is required of term-time attention to maps and sketch drawings where applicable, particularly in Natural History as a scientific study.

Form III. Here very few questions require a straightforward narration—for instance 'Describe two characters from *The Monastery* or *The Chester Pageant of the Deluge*' or 'Describe carefully either (a) distilled water and how it is obtained, or (b) the hydrometer and its uses'. Paragraphing is looked for in this form, opportunity is given for original composition (including verse) and Citizenship demands some definite ethical thinking—for example, 'Tell a story about Pompey which shows his ambition for power'. I shall never forget my early attempts to do some question setting under Miss Kitching's guidance when, after several hours of careful reading and planning, I took a set of Citizenship questions to her only to be told, 'My dear, those are history questions, not citizenship!'

Form IV. Once again, as in IA, fluency is in danger of becoming a runaway steed, therefore the questions must be framed to control it (though usually at least one opportunity is given for a straightforward narrative), so we ask, 'Outline the development of government in our country since 1689', or 'Write short accounts or definitions and give examples of (a) dicotyledons, (b) Caryophyllaceae, (c) floral diagram', and occasionally for elementary instances of comparison and analogy. A Form IV set of papers presents the examiners with greater bulk than any other and should show evidence of a very full mind, learning to select what is relevant to the question and therefore not likely to be too much troubled in Form V where strict self-discipline is required as a preparation for the General Certificate. Précis is expected, of course, and essay form, and one eye on the clock—because the subjects are too big to deal with at full length in the time available, therefore style must be pruned, format studied and the question valued with a realisation of the exact meaning of its wording, for example, 'Consider some Utopian ideals in the light of modern ways', was a question where, alas, too many enthusiasts devoted all but the last sentence to the first half of the question!

Form VI. How I wish many more of you were familiar with the real thrill of this near-adult work, sometimes part of the preparation for Advanced G.C.E. and sometimes purely an adventure in personal study. If you have seen a set of Form VI examinations and read the forewords, you will have noticed that here we no longer have 'questions' but titles—'The Wise Man of *Ecclesiastes* and *Wisdom*' or 'Man and His Reason' or 'History books I have enjoyed' or 'Some rogues of fiction' or 'Some weather phenomena and their causes'. It often happens that a Form VI pupil wishes to submit an essay on a subject not set on the programme; in this case we are always prepared to include a special title provided proper notice is given, because this work is highly individual and if it is to be real it must meet individual needs: we may get a request for something suitable for a girl who is preparing to become a doctor, or for one who has been reading a particular period of history because she

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missed it on her way up the school, or a literary essay in a foreign language.

You may be thinking that my survey of the questions has been rather one-sided because I have only dealt with what are too often loosely called narration subjects. I have done this deliberately because the more formal mathematics, languages, etc., are tests in the accepted term of the word and differ very little from those in general practice, whereas the literary work exemplifies Miss Mason's principle that an examination question should ask, 'How much do you know about—?'. In answering such a question, the difference between the more and less able pupil lies in quantity of content rather than in the ratio of right and wrong in a set of unrelated queries requiring short factual replies.

There is a very great deal more of interest in this part of our work. I will only bring forward one more aspect of our subject—special members—about which only a limited, though steadily increasing number of our school teachers know. Special membership is an arrangement made through a school by which a pupil is entitled to send in examinations each Christmas and summer, receive a personal report on them, and, in addition, be supplied with a copy of programmes and examinations (for the interest of parents and pupil, who will find them full of suggestions for good leisure reading and occupations). This report differs from that of the usual specimen paper report on an independent school or class in that it applies only to that one pupil (as for a home schoolroom pupil), whereas the other is compiled and perhaps commented on as an average specimen of the class and of the result of the work of both pupil and teacher. When a school consists entirely or largely of special member pupils, a general report of the work is available on payment of a fee: this supplements the personal reports and is intended as a guide to the principal and staff and as a basis for discussion (not as in any sense a disciplinary measure!). In it strengths and weaknesses are pointed out and continuity of commentary is maintained from one year to another. To give you some idea of the character of such a document I am going to quote from one issued at Christmas, hoping that the school to which it refers will forgive me as I am quoting it quite anonymously.

'The examination was taken by 91 out of the 93 children in the school. The papers were, as usual, assembled and presented excellently. The teachers' comments were careful and revealing, especially with regard to the children's character, and in the life of the school.

'The amount of work covered by the middle forms in the course of the term is very wide, though outside activities, walks, rides and games are evidently not neglected.

'Liveliness and vivacity appear in the narrations together with a quite high standard of ability. Most children appear to have the urge to express themselves in words. In the examination we are concerned with what they express and how they express it.

'And here the P.U.S. standards are quite clear. The formative influence both over ideas and their expression is to be that of the best masters of thought and expression in the language. The children's minds have to be brought into close contact with the highest standards of litera-

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tion. The text, therefore, of the books studied is very important, and can usually be left to speak for itself. Glosses, for example, on the Bible narrative, often serve only to divert interest away from what is vital. The comment "keep to the text" is meant to emphasise this point.

'Perhaps an illustration may help to make this clear. The children's behaviour and manners will be largely determined by the tradition of the school. Their code will be absorbed, naturally and unconsciously, from what they see around them. The atmosphere of a school is a most potent influence in this respect. So with the child's inner behaviour or thought. The child's mind will live and feed on that by which it is surrounded. Miss Mason was most emphatic on this point as the teachers will know. What the examiner wishes to stress is that this principle is very important, not only as regards content, but as regards form as well. The great minds teach us not only facts and ideas, but order, word economy, assessment of values, an appreciation of what is important or not important, humility of mind, dignity of speech, integrity, indeed all the virtues of that region of man's being in which the mental tends to blend and merge into the moral.

'So "keep to the text" implies much more than a slavish adherence to *ipsissima verba*. The exact words do not matter. What does matter is that the mental activity of a deep and disciplined mind may be shared by us and in time made our own. The P.U.S. examiner is looking for this as soon as the technique of writing is mastered, and more and more as the child progresses from Form to Form. It is the essential point of P.U.S. teaching.' . . .

I hope I have been able to show you in a few small ways how the P.U.S. examination brings into focus the term's work for each pupil, and quite a lot about its value to you as teachers, but, in case the idea is fresh to you, I would like to close with the suggestion that there is yet further use to which the questions may be put — namely, as models for framing subjects for reports and essays to be set during the term. When I was teaching I used to find them an invaluable guide for this purpose, but not until I came to work on them from the issuing end, did I quite realise why. Now in them I see plainly a pattern of progress — a manner of approach and a demand appropriate to each age and subject, which is as necessary a characteristic of successful written work in exercise books as it is in examination papers, if we are to maintain our tradition that proper education eliminates exaggerated preparation for public examinations, that they really can be taken 'in the stride' of each suitable pupil, and that they need not be a hindrance to education in its fullest sense, but rather an integral part of it, providing a sense of achievement and a measure for growth. It is, as Charlotte Mason so simply states, 'our part to see that every child *knows* and *can tell*, whether by way of oral narrative or written essay', and this applies far beyond the limits of termly examination and indeed of the schoolroom itself.

